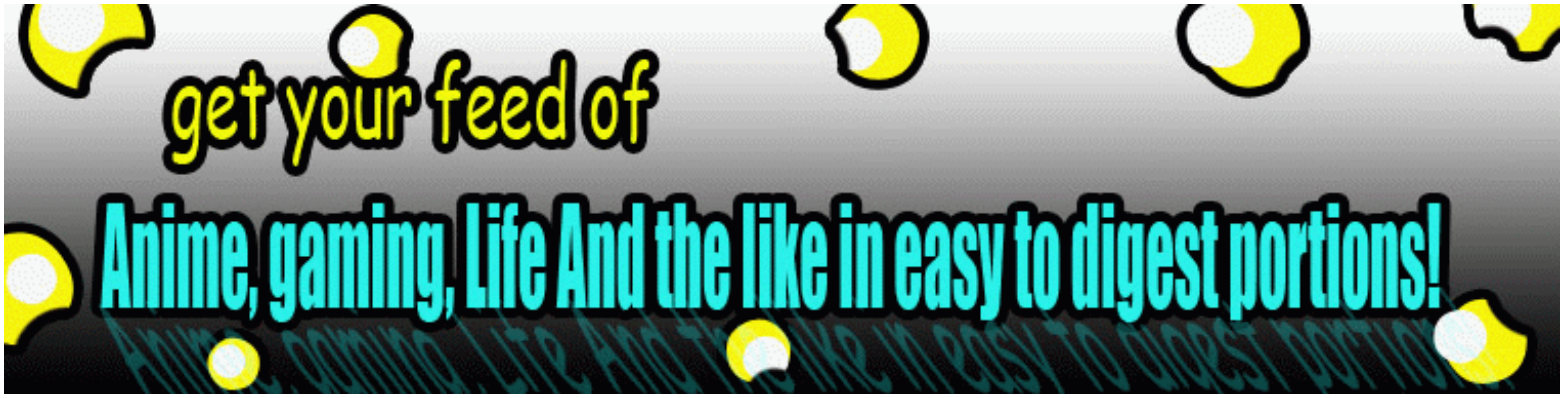
Cynjo's TechNook

Always a glass half



The Phantom Gamestore

December 21, 2008 by 3amshinigami

the-phantom

When the world at large believes your product is vaporware, your company has never made a cent and your former chairman has been indicted by the Securities and Exchange Commission for promulgating a pump and dump scheme, it's going to be difficult to convince them that you're on the level.

Especially when your company pays its bills primarily by issuing more stock. *Especially* when your company negotiates all major, recent agreements with companies run by that same former chairman. ***Especially*** when it turns out that your new online game distribution network is actually a fresh coat of paint on another company's existing catalog. ***Especially*** when the day after that digital distribution network launches, it vanishes into thin air.

But that's not going to stop Phantom Entertainment CEO John Landino from trying. We spoke to Landino yesterday afternoon about what, exactly, happened to the Phantom Gamestore — and he made every effort to convince us that this time, things are not what they seem.

The Gamestore

When dealing with a company whose chairman allegedly made $400,000 by attracting investment with false promises, the words "We had a successful launch!" on that company's *down-for-maintenance screen* are liable to set off a

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few alarm bells. Is that the scheme? Will they "launch" just long enough to bump their stock and call it a day?

But when I spoke to John Landino, he didn't have any prepared excuses for what had happened — and told me straightaway that the service would be back up and running within "the next day or two."

Furthermore, Landino was entirely up front about the fact that Phantom themselves did not negotiate for the rights to sell the games. "We're working on a new strategy to work directly with game manufacturers," he said. "Right now, the reason we've got the games we've currently got is from a partnership with third parties."

Though the Phantom CEO wasn't willing to disclose the names of those who actually supply their games, the fact remains that if the Gamestore does open within the next day or two — and this will be quite easy to check up on — it will go a long way towards proving that Phantom is on the straight and narrow.

The Lapboard

While the Phantom console itself fizzled and died years ago, the company's auxiliary product lived on: the Phantom Lapboard. Four years after being announced, and even after several disappointing reviews, the device still *looks* fairly slick and has the power to generate a bit of buzz.

Thing is, though they managed to get several units into the hands of reviewers earlier this year, it doesn't seem they've actually had any **for sale**. But Landino was adamant that has changed. "We'll have the Lapboard shipped from China, out of St. Louis, in January," he said — and this morning, he informed me that the very first sample packages had arrived. He even provided video proof:

How did Phantom manage to finally pay for a real shipment? Well, that's where things get complicated.

The Company

Landino told me basically what I already knew from the company's press release in August: the most recent influx of money to produce the Lapboard comes from a "separate" company called Phantom Game Service, AKA Phantom Streaming, which "was started to expand on streaming technologies," according to the CEO.

However, there are three rather interesting things to note about Phantom Game Service. One, according to the Division of Corporations for the State of Delaware, PGS was incorporated on August 8th, just three days before the deal. Two, SEC filings show the resulting company is not quite what you'd call separate: Phantom Entertainment now owns 49% of PGS, and gets 7% of their online game revenue.

Three, PGS is run by the same Tim Roberts who was indicted by the SEC in 2006 and resigned from Phantom Entertainment in 2007 — and both companies share active staff (a web designer and a financial controller) as well.

Meanwhile, what did PGS/Phantom Streaming get in exchange for nearly half of their stock and $65,000 in cash? The very same technologies that are supposedly powering the Phantom Gamestore. Phantom sold them to Phantom Streaming, Phantom Streaming licensed them to GameStreamer — a company incorporated October 23rd with practically the exact same staff as Phantom Streaming, including CEO Tim Roberts — and GameStreamer turned them right around to Phantom Entertainment once again for their online store.

When I asked Landino how Phantom Game Service, seemingly a direct spinoff of

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Phantom, was able to raise the funds, he told us that that PGS had private investors.

The Family?

But according to Landino, Phantom isn't just in business today because of timely investment — they're still around, he said, because the employees are basically working for free. "We're here because we're invested in the company," Landino told me. "No stock or compensation… we're working hard to turn this company around, for nothing."

Noting some anger in the CEO's voice, I asked how it felt to now have to work with Tim Roberts, widely blamed for the failure of the original Phantom. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he exonerated the former chairman, saying that he was merely "implicated" in the scandal, had paid his $30,000 dues, and that the real crooks had long since left the business.

I'm not sure who to believe. After years of nothing but corporate scandal culminating in this trifecta of tightly knit yet "separate" companies, it's difficult to see Phantom as anything more; but on the other hand, it is remotely possible that the company is finally coming clean, and needs this little bit of… synergy to do so.

It's only a matter of days — according to Landino — before we find out.

But is it legal and ethical to bait investors with press releases that proclaim the virtues of corporate deals that are effectively being conducted by multiple facets of the same corporation? We're not qualified to say — but we'll be investigating the matter soon.

Credit::**gamecyte.com**

Posted in Tech NEWS | Tagged China, GameStreamer, John Landino, PC, Phantom Entertainment, Phantom Lapboard, Tim Roberts | Leave a Comment »

2008's Top $200 Video

December 21, 2008 by 3amshinigami

If you bought a new video card two or three years ago, you've probably noticed that newer games aren't running as well right out of the box. Those GeForce 7900 and Radeon X1900 cards were fantastic when they were new, but game developers have caught up with more power-hungry graphics effects. Frame rates have started to dip, and you might have had to reduce the game-resolution and image-quality settings to get system performance up to acceptable levels. Lowering the image quality isn't a desirable long-term solution, so it's probably time to upgrade that video card.

These cards aren't the top-of-the-line performance champions, but they'll have enough power to get you through a couple more years of PC gaming, and you can put the money you save on the video card toward buying more games and paying for that massively multiplayer online habit.

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GeForce GTX 260 Core

The original GeForce GTX 260 that Nvidia launched in June 2008 came with 192 processing cores and a $399 price tag. Nvidia had to lower the GTX 260´s price to $299 after AMD released the highly affordable ATI Radeon HD 4870. Later in the year, Nvidia started shipping an improved GeForce GTX 260 with 216 processing cores.

Cards based on this new GeForce GTX 260 Core 216 GPU are selling for $299. The problem is that the video card makers still have a lot of the original 192-core GeForce GTX 260 chips to unload. The GeForce GTX 260 is the most expensive card in our roundup, coming it at $229, but it has a lot of firepower and is considerably more affordable than it was just a few months ago.

Est. Retail Price: $229

ATI Radeon HD 4870

The ATI Radeon HD 4870 is the second $299 card that’s starting to approach the magical $200 price point. Its closest competitor is the GeForce GTX 260, which has a slight edge in frame rates and in games with PhysX support, but the Radeon has a few features that make it attractive for PC owners looking for a balance between gaming and utility. That’s not saying that the card isn’t good for gaming.

The Radeon HD 4870 can run all the latest games at high resolution thanks to its 800 stream processing units and GDDR5 memory, but the card is also great for PC game enthusiasts looking for home-theater support. The card supports full HDMI output with 7.1 surround sound.

Est. Retail Price: $219

ATI Radeon HD 3870 X2

The ATI Radeon HD 3870 X2 is a dual-GPU card from the previous graphics generation. We included the card in our comparison because you will still find it online at close to $200, but you'd be wise to avoid buying one of these cards new because the Radeon HD 4870 has made them obsolete. The Radeon HD 3870 X2 comes with 640 stream processors, 320 from each onboard GPU, but that's well below the 4870's stream processor count, and the 3870 X2 card also uses slower GDDR3 memory.

Est. Retail Price: $219

GeForce 9600 GT SLI

The dual-card value proposition Nvidia and AMD have tried to sell us with SLI and CrossFire is that you can buy a card now and add a second one later if you need more power. The only problem with that argument is that if you wait more than a year to buy that second card, chances are you'd be able to buy a completely new card that's more powerful than two of the old cards put together. The cost of the new card would of course be more expensive than the older card, which would likely have dropped in price, but the performance gap between a new card and an older SLI setup makes the decision to complete the matching set a bittersweet choice. The main benefit is that if you've already sunk your money into a single GeForce 9600 GT card, spending another $100 on a second card will get your system's graphics performance close to what you'd get with a single $200 card.

Est. Retail Price: $200 ($100×2)

GeForce 9800 GTX+

The GeForce 9800 GTX+ leads the trio of cards under $200 for players who can't justify reaching for the GeForce GTX 260 or ATI Radeon HD 4870. Nvidia introduced the GeForce 9800 GTX+ this summer around the time AMD launched its Radeon HD 4800-series GPUs. The GeForce 9800 GTX+ has the same number of processors as the regular GeForce 9800 GTX, but has higher clocks speeds thanks to a smaller manufacturing process. Moving down from 65nm to 55nm allowed Nvidia to increase core clock speeds from 675MHz to 738MHz and shader speeds from 1690MHz to 1836MHz. The GTX+ originally sold for $229, but the price has drifted down as the prices of more powerful cards have also moved down.

Est. Retail Price: $189

GeForce 9800 GTX

A $20 price difference might not seem like a big deal at the high end where cards can cost $400 or more, but the price difference becomes more important when card prices get below $200 and a $20 difference can mean more than 10 percent of the cost of the card.

The GeForce 9800 GTX may be slower than the GTX+, but some people might be willing to give up 9 percent in performance for a more affordable card. Adventurous card owners can also try overclocking to recoup the lost performance.

Est. Retail Price: $169

ATI Radeon HD 4850

It seems unfair to stick the ATI Radeon HD 4850 into the same comparison as the Radeon HD 4870, but we found several 4850 cards floating in the $159 to $185 price range. The Radeon HD 4850 has 800 stream processors, just like the Radeon HD 4870, but it has a slower core clock, 625MHz compared to 750MHz on the 4870, and comes with only GDDR3 memory. All of the multimedia features, including high-definition video playback and HDMI output support, are the same, but the differences in core clock speeds and memory bandwidth make the 4870 a better choice for games.

Est. Retail Price: $169

Read Full Article HERE >>

Posted in Tech NEWS | Tagged 2008, ATI, ATI Radeon HD 4870, gamspot, GeForce, GeForce GTX 260, Graphics processing unit, Nvidia, Radeon, Radeon R600, Radeon R700 | Leave a Comment »

Tech News: Consumers h ray Last Week

December 21, 2008 by 3amshinigami

According to Home Media Magazine, consumers spent over $60M on Blu-ray titles last week, representing 14% of the home media market. The 167% spike is due in large part to the Blu-ray release of 'The Dark Knight', which is breaking Blu-ray sales records around the world. Comparatively, the previous week, where 'Wanted' was the hot new release, consumers spent $23.64M on Blu-ray.

On the year in whole, consumers have spent nearly $500M on Blu-ray titles, and the average spent per week has been growing as adoption continues to rise.

Posted in Tech NEWS | Tagged Blu-Ray, Dark Knight, DVD, Home Media Magazine, Iron Man, Movies, Wanted, Warner Bros | Leave a Comment »

New Wii Epidemic: "Wi

December 21, 2008 by 3amshinigami

Adding to the list of growing Wii injury "epidemics", doctor's in the United Kingdom have warned new holiday Wii owners to take it easy, lest they get "Wii Knee" .

Researchers at the Leeds Teaching Hospital said that playing too much Wii can cause "painful strains and fractures" in all areas of the body, just not the knees.

Richard MIlner of the British Society for Surgery of the Hand (BSSH) said that he had treated many more "Wii injuries" in the past year.

"We treated a patient this week who had injured herself using a Wii. She was playing tennis with a partner and fractured one of the bones in her finger when he hit the back of her hand with the control," Milner said.

Another doctor, Andrew Coley, said he had treated a patient that had played the

Wii for too long. “This patient had got a Wii for Christmas, hadn’t exercised in a while and overdid it,” Coley said. Apparently the good doctor also got too excited playing the Wii, saying that he “hurt [him]self by trying to get an Ace on [his] serve in the tennis game.”

Credit: **thesun.co.uk**

Editor notes: Athletes tear tendons a lot because they don’t warm up. Or hurt their hamstring from not getting enough fluids. Wiitards swing there arms uncontrollably till they tear there rotator cup or loose there wiimote and it collides with there TV or a nearby spectators face. Since this was a write up from *thesun.co.uk* it leads me to question the validity of this article.

Posted in Wii/Nintendo | Tagged Christmas, Health, Injury, nintendo, United Kingdom, Wii, Wii Knee, Wii Play, Wii sports, wiimote | Leave a Comment »

Wii Outselling XBOX 3

December 21, 2008 by 3amshinigami

Sales have been just as blistering in Canada. Despite the economic woes affecting most Canadians, Nintendo still managed to sell more than 123,000 Wii consoles here in November – a 40-per-cent increase over the same month one year ago.

The red-hot sales in North America have seen Nintendo increase Wii production at least three times over the past two years. The company is now shipping 50 per cent of all Wiis into North America in an attempt to meet demand

Read Full Article HERE >>

Posted in Wii/Nintendo | Tagged Christmas, DS, Games, holiday season, nintendo, North America, November, Wii, Wii Outselling, Xbox 360 | Leave a Comment »

Here a few Reasons Wh In 2009

December 21, 2008 by 3amshinigami

The Xbox 360 has done considerable well through-out 2008, and ended with a bang with Gears of War 2. Microsoft, and its team look to be set for 2009, and what it has to offer, and could very well give other consoles a run for their money this coming year. Below we have five reasons why we believe the 360 could very well kick butt in 2009.

1. Bishock 2

We all loved the first title. In fact the game got many awards including the Game of the Year award from many websites across the net. The title made its first appearance on the 360, and then a year later on the Playstation 3 allowing 360 gamers to show their pride in owning a console that got it first. With Bioshock 2 having been announced through a hidden clip on the Playstation 3 version it seems as though the sequel will go multi-platform this time around, but a game that once started out on the 360 will no doubt keep the 360 right by its side making sure both version are exactly the same. Currently no official release date has been announced, but it is scheduled as a TBA 2009. A definite title for 360 gamers to watch out for!

2. Economy Recession means DVD > Blu-ray

In an economic recession like today, people tend to hold onto their money in fear of losing it all through what the media projects to be a failing economy. This very fact of consumers holding onto their money is a prime advantage to the 360. With the 360 console being the cheapest on the market it will no doubt attract consumers wishing to spend less this Christmas, and into 2009. Not only is the console cheaper, but Blu-ray is becoming a big no, no with the economic situation. Not only is the player more expensive than a DVD player, but discs are often a few dollars more, not to mention the visible difference tends to only be visible on monitors larger than 32″. Now that doesnt mean Blu-ray is utter crap. Its a great new advancement by all means, but until the economy picks up again we won't see the sales significantly increase.

3. Halo 3: ODST

We all loved the day Halo 3 come out. It's immerse storyline, and addicting multiplayer made it a favorite among Xbox gamers, and its still one of the most played Xbox Live games to date, and Im certain that wont change for quite some time. Bungie recently announced a new expansion title Halo 3: ODST that will surely bring new favor to the title. Even after two years the game will come back to life with new multiplayer maps (Mystic Map Pack), and a whole new

singleplayer experience. The expansion will be available fall 2009. Time to get my game back on!

4. Mass Effect 2

The success of Mass Effect was a surprise to myself, and many others, but it no doubt proved itself as a fantastic 360 title. Success of a title only means great things to come in the future, and no doubt it has. The sequel to Mass Effect is currently unannounced, but it currently holds a TBA 2009 release date. Little is currently known, but Casey Hudson, Project Director for BioWare has noted to gamers to keep their save files from the first Mass Effect as it can, and will be used to your advantage when playing Mass Effect 2. More action packed goodies await, and I can't wait!

5. Halo Wars

It's a real pity that this is Ensemble's last project. Having been a fan of their work since 1997 with the release of Age of Empires it is going to leave a big stain when they leave in 2009. Before they depart they do have one last mission, and it is to finish Halo Wars for all 360 gamers! Strategy games have always

been a foreign genre to consoles, but with recent titles like Tom Clancy's End War, and soon to be released Halo Wars, developers are proving to gamers that you do not need a mouse, and keyboard to rule the map. Halo Wars allows you to have all the RTS fun right within the Halo world. Currently the schedule release date is the second quarter of 2009, and I'll be sure to pick up this title, and just because of its high expectations, but also to pay tribute to Ensemble for their great work over the last 12 years.

Full Credit: **gamextract.com**

Posted in Xbox 360 | Tagged 2009, BioWare, Bishock 2, economy, Halo 3: ODST, Halo Wars, Mass Effect 2, microsoft, new year, PlayStation 3, Recession, Xbox 360 | Leave a Comment »

Microsoft's Answer To

December 21, 2008 by 3amshinigami

Whether you call it downloadable content, game add-ons or digital media distribution, the new wave of accessing information for console games is drastically evolving thanks to die-hard efforts of Microsoft and Sony. The industry is continually finding ways to break out of the reliance of hard-copied media formats. And even though both Microsoft and Sony are vying to gain exclusives with their respective online services, Microsoft has taken things a step further for the sake of keeping the Xbox 360 alive in 2009.

It's no surprise that the Xbox 360 is showing its age every year on the market. Toss in the fact that between the red rings of doom and the disc scratching fiasco, the Xbox 360 isn't looking future proof at all.

Things look worse for the console when you add in the fact that Microsoft could be facing major competition from Blu-ray in 2009. Simply considering that the now archaic storage space of the DVD format is at its limit and Microsoft is well aware of this. We've already seen exclusive media content featured in multiplatform PS3 games thanks to the extended data storage of the optical media: PS3 gamers were treated to additional content in games like 2K Games' *The Darkness* or Rockstar's *Grand Theft Auto IV*. If this tradition continues (i.e., developers favoring the storage space of Blu-ray with additional game content) and Sony actually puts in the necessary effort to leverage PS3 hardware sales, then it might be a quick-turning tide between Microsoft and Sony's consoles throughout 2009.

However, Microsoft has not been sitting by in idle anticipation of what may or may not happen in the following year. Their answer to the Blu-ray storage advantage is already in play, and it's already been established. Using Xbox Live as the prime service platform to offer exclusive Digital Media Downloads (DMD) across the spectrum of games, movies and music, is the perfect way to compensate for the lacking storage size of the DVD format.

Now I know a lot of you are thinking, "Isn't Sony doing the exact same thing with the PlayStation Network?" Yes, it's true that Sony is also unleashing a cavalcade of content for PSN users to try to make the service look as appealing as Xbox

Live. They've been offering movies and television shows since E3. However, Microsoft isn't just about granting gamers the basic means of content, they're all about one-upsmanship. This has already been established with the exclusive episodic content for *Grand Theft Auto IV*, which will only be available on the Xbox 360, via Xbox Live.

Even with 50 gigabytes of storage space, PS3 gamers will never have access to content that couldn't fit on a standard DVD. Microsoft's plan of gaining rights to exclusive content and distributing the digital media on Xbox Live is the perfect way to keep gamers from completely jumping on-board with Sony, the PS3 and Blu-ray. This would hold especially true if a price-cut is planned for Sony's console later on in the second quarter of 2009.

If Microsoft can stave off the masses from accelerating PS3 sales throughout 2009, with continued exclusive content for big-name games and media, then they'll be standing on the perfect plateau for expanding the Xbox brand with a new console in 2010.

*Credit:***cinemablend.com**

Posted in Xbox 360 | Tagged digital media distribution, DVD, Grand Theft Auto, gtaiv, microsoft, PlayStation Network, PS3, PSN, Video game, Xbox 360, Xbox Live | Leave a Comment »

Video game/Hardware C 2008 (NPD)

December 16, 2008 by 3amshinigami

The NPD Group, which tracks the video game industry, reported Monday that 2008 sales in Canada including hardware, software and accessories were $1.6 billion through November – up 36 per cent from the $1.1 billion over the same period a year ago.

NOV 08 Hardware
Wii: 123K
X360: 74K
PS3: 41K

NOV 08 Software
1. Gears of War 2
2. Call of Duty: World at War (X360)
3. Mario Kart
4. Call of Duty: World at War (PS3)
5. Wii Fit

Posted in Xbox 360 | Tagged Call of Duty: World at War, Gears of War 2, Mario Kart, Microsoft Xbox 360, nintendo, NPD Group, PlayStation 3, Sony, Wii Fit, Wii/Nintendo | Leave a Comment »

Square Enix/Tri-Ace re Art/New Screens!

December 16, 2008 by 3amshinigami

“Square Enix and tri-Ace have released the official Japanese box art for Star Ocean: The Last Hope for the Xbox 360. Oddly, it does not have the “Only on Xbox 360″ stamp on it as usual Xbox 360 exclusives do. Along with the box art, they’ve released a few brand new stunning screenshots. Hit the gallery for the screenshots and larger box art.”

Star-Ocean-The-Last-Hope_2008_12-15-08_02

Star-Ocean-The-Last-Hope_2008_12-15-08_03

Star-Ocean-The-Last-Hope_2008_12-15-08_04

Posted in Xbox 360 | Tagged Box Art, exclusive, gallery, Japanese, microsoft, New Screens, Square Enix, Star Ocean, Star-Ocean-The-Last-Hope, Tri-Ace, Xbox 360 | Leave a Comment »

Time Magazine insults

December 12, 2008 by 3amshinigami

Time Magazine released their top 10 games of 2008 awards, but what should have been an celebration for games has actually turned into a backhanded compliment.

Since 1923 it has been one of the most important media outlets on the planet, with well-deserved respect in all corners of the globe. The magazine recently published its Top 10 of Everything 2008 awards which criss-crossed all aspects of human life: the likes of current affairs, politics, sport, music, film, science, food and video games.

We haven't got a problem with the publication's game selection in the Top 10 however we have a massive issue with the channel to which they assigned the video game list.

The 50 individual Top 10 lists found in the feature are broken up into four channels: News & Science, Arts & Entertainment, Business, Tech & Sport and finally Pop Culture. So where did video gaming fall? Arts & Entertainment, right? Nope! Oh… ok, what about Pop Culture? Guess again! Um… That's right, according to Time Magazine our industry is best defined by the channel Business, Tech & Sport. Well, that sucks!

Effectively, what we have here is one of the biggest and most influential publications on the planet failing to recognise gaming as entertainment, let alone art. This is quite a kick in the nads for all concerned. For years those of us on 'the inside' – gamers, if you will – have been trumpeting videogaming's place in the scheme of our great big commercial world. We've watched as gaming has grown to become the biggest economic force in entertainment. We've watched as actors, directors, musicians, authors and comic book writers have thrown themselves into the medium at an exponentially growing rate. We've watched our biggest and best heroes and villains take centre stage at massive cultural events.

But we've also watched as critics like Roger Ebert have put our passion down. We've argued till we're blue in the face with politicians to have the classification system acknowledge our grown maturity. We've suffered time and time again under the oppression of the Baby Boom generation who seem intent on blaming the acts of today's dissatisfied youth on the games they play. And now, just when we were beginning to make headway and get the respect we deserve, someone with the influence of Time Magazine boots us back to the Stone Age.

And they've added insult to injury…

On top of this, they've chosen the biggest entertainment blockbuster of the year, Grand Theft Auto IV, as their number one game: over 12 million sales and counting in eight months which, by account, is worth over US$800 million dollars. C'mon! Time Magazine even says in the game's blurb, "No game developers are more radical and more passionate about the storytelling power of their medium than folks at Rockstar North, and GTA IV is the company's most ambitious work ever. It's a grade-A shoot-'em-up that doubles as an interactive novel and triples as a sly critique of American consumer culture." But it's a back-handed compliment: in the end they still filed the thing under "fuck you."

check out The Most Influential Developers of 2008 for the real story.

Credit::*http://www.gameplayer.com*

Posted in Xbox 360 | Tagged 10 games of 2008 awards, Arts & Entertainment, critics, games industry, gaming, GRAND THEFT AUTO IV, GTA IV, News and Reviews, Rockstar North, Roger Ebert, Time Magazine, Top 10 of Everything 2008, Video game | Leave a Comment »

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